

Cooperative Conservation U.S. Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2007 Annual Report

Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiatives

Fort A.P. Hill, VA	3
Fort Carson, CO	5
Fort Sill, OK	7
Townsend Bombing Range, GA	9
Naval Air Station Fallon, NV	11
US Army Garrison, Hawaii (Oahu, Hawaii)	13

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**Cooperative Conservation
Department of Defense
Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI)
Activity for the Annual Report**

Location

Fort A.P. Hill, VA

Key Interagency Partners

Department of Defense, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Virginia Department of Natural Resources

Key Local Partners

The Nature Conservancy; Trust for Public Land; The Conservation Fund; Virginia Outdoor Foundation; and county governments

Description of Activity

Fort A.P. Hill is one of the largest military installations on the East Coast and the training center nearest the National Capital Region. The installation's ranges rate among the finest in the United States, and surrounding land and water represent an area of great ecological interest in Virginia. For most of its history, Fort A.P. Hill has been surrounded by rural land, unaffected by incompatible land use. In recent years, two adjacent counties experienced significant growth in close proximity to the installation.

Fort A.P. Hill and surrounding lands represent largely rural area of Virginia and contain a number of important wildlife habitats and natural areas, including large, relatively un-fragmented forestland, tidal freshwater marshes, and acidic seepage swamps. This land contains five federally listed threatened and endangered species and some of the state's best natural areas.

Conserving this land ensures the installation's ability to provide a robust and flexible military training environment. To protect training and preserve natural areas, the Department of Defense (DoD), US Fish & Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy, Virginia Outdoors Foundation, Trust for Public Land, and The Conservation Fund entered into a Memorandum of Understanding in December 2006 to create the Fort A.P. Hill Conservation Working Group. This cooperative conservation effort has several goals: to

promote the establishment of landscape corridors and buffers in the Rappahannock River Valley, encourage regional dialogue among the parties and other organizations, and enhance the long-term sustainability of Fort A.P. Hill's military mission.

DoD's conservation buffer program, the Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI), enables the military to partner with outside stakeholder to promote land conservation that supports military missions and the natural habitat. When completed, DoD and partners will create a buffer comprising of nearly 35,000 acres along the north, south and west boundaries of Fort A.P. Hill. Buffer project partners aim to preserve the ecological integrity of the area to prevent operational restrictions likely to occur if encroachment continues.

"We are all looking forward to more good news and a bright future for Fort A.P. Hill and the communities surrounding it."

Mr. Alan Front
Senior Vice President
Trust for Public Land

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**Cooperative Conservation
Department of Defense
Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI)
Activity for the Annual Report**

Location

Fort Carson, CO

Key Interagency Partners

Department of Defense, US Fish & Wildlife Service, State of Colorado

Key Local Partners

The Nature Conservancy, Great Outdoors Colorado, El Paso County

Description of Activity

Fort Carson, a key installation in the West and home to the largest regiment in the Army, was one of the earliest buffer projects developed to mitigate incompatible development while conserving rare plant and wildlife species. Located southeast of Colorado Springs, CO, Fort Carson contains several maintenance and training facilities for tanks and other tracked and wheeled vehicles. The installation is also home to the Butts Army Air Field, an active runway and hangar facility used by Army rotary-wing aircraft. Protecting the installation's southern and eastern boundaries from encroachment is crucial to sustaining its critical training areas, shortgrass prairie habitat, and open space.

The Department of Defense (DoD), The Nature Conservancy, and other federal and state partners, acquired 12,712 acres of conservation easements adjacent to Fort Carson to date. Conservation easements acquired to date eliminate potential encroachment conflicts from development that would impact some of Fort Carson's most critical training sites, including its Multi-Purpose Range Complex and Large Impact Area.

Buffering supports the protection of several rare and at-risk species habitats from incompatible development, including high quality populations of globally rare, locally endemic plant species in the shortgrass prairie. This conservation land provides excellent habitat for the mountain plover, black-tailed prairie dog, pueblo goldenweed, and round-leaf four-o'clock.

Funds from the Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI), DoD's conservation buffer program, enabled Fort Carson to partner with outside stakeholders to prevent encroachment by promoting land conservation that supports the military mission. Cumulatively, the project targets 60,000 acres of land to protect the installation's future training capability and to preserve the ranching heritage and shortgrass prairie habitat.

“Great strides have been made to create a buffer zone around Fort Carson that will protect... critical wildlife, provide large-scale training benefits to the military, and allow local ranchers to continue their traditional way of life. This three-way win for the military, ranchers and conservation protects this classic land ‘where the antelope roam.’”

The Denver Post, Editorial

“Colorado Conservation Strides in 2005 Are Encouraging”

December 30, 2005

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**Cooperative Conservation
Department of Defense
Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI)
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Location

Fort Sill, OK

Key Interagency Partners

Department of Defense; State of Oklahoma; US Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Key Local Partners

City of Lawton, OK; Land Legacy, Inc.; Comanche County Industrial
Business Authority

Description of Activity

Conservation easements recently purchased near Fort Sill are preserving an important way of life through the conservation of farm lands while also protecting the installation from future encroachment.

The Department of Defense (DoD), US Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA NRCS), State of Oklahoma, City of Lawton, Land Legacy, private landowners, and other federal and state organizations, hope to conserve over twenty thousand acres of land near Fort Sill. The installation is home to the Army's Field Artillery Center and is responsible for training artillerymen for both the Army and Marine Corps.

At present, artillery training causes the installation minimum complaints from its neighbors. However, the installation's south border is experiencing encroachment pressures from the nearby (growing) city of Lawton. Continued incompatible development of land near Fort Sill's boundary may produce significant obstacles, as many of the installation's firing points are along the perimeter of its training sites.

The Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI), DoD's conservation buffer program, enables the military to partner with outside stakeholders (including willing landowners) to promote land conservation that supports military missions and the natural habitat. The property of A.J.

Ryder, project partner and neighbor to Fort Sill, became the first conservation easement purchase for the Fort Sill buffer. It is the first time that a REPI or USDA NRCS project protected land for farming benefit as opposed to a purely natural resource benefit. Conserving Mr. Ryder's ranch attracted the attention of several more willing landowners in the area who asked to take part in this buffer in the future.

“By partnering with the Army on this effort, we will preserve up to 20,000 acres of open lands and natural resources.”

Robert Gregory
Director, Land Legacy

“By preserving open lands around the installation, we will prevent urban development from interfering with critical training activities at Fort Sill. We will also be preserving farms and ranches and other important natural resources for future generations.”

Alex Beehler
Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense
(Environment, Safety and Occupational Health)

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**Cooperative Conservation
Department of Defense
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Location

Townsend Bombing Range, GA
(Operated by MCAS Beaufort, SC)

Key Interagency Partners

Department of Defense

Key Local Partners

The Nature Conservancy

Description of Activity

Townsend Bombing Range (TBR) is MCAS Beaufort's backyard inert range, located in southern coastal Georgia. The 5,183-acre joint use range is owned by the Marine Corps and operated by the Georgia Army National Guard. TBR supports aircraft from all services extending from Alabama to North Carolina. The climate around the bombing range is conducive to its flight training mission, as blue skies enable flights to operate uninterrupted by bad weather. The range is situated in Georgia's Altamaha River Ecosystem, designated by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) as one of the 75 "Last Great Places."

The primary threat to TBR's mission is residential development. As residents of hurricane-prone regions in the southeast U.S. head north, new development near TBR would be subject to high levels of noise during training. Water quality, floodplains, wetland, and stream banks along the range and Altamaha River would also be threatened by this incompatible development.

To mitigate this encroachment threat, the Department of Defense (DoD) and TNC entered into a cooperative partnership in 2006 to conserve 10,687 acres on the northwest and southeast boundaries of TBR. Funds from DoD's conservation buffer program, the Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI), served as a significant source of funding to support this conservation initiative. DoD and TNC are ensuring the long-term protection

of this buffer that will prevent restrictions on military activities at TBR and conserve the critical Altamaha River ecosystem.

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**Cooperative Conservation
Department of Defense
Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI)
Activity for the Annual Report**

Location

Naval Air Station Fallon, NV

Key Interagency Partners

Department of Defense

Key Local Partners

Churchill County, NV

Description of Activity

Naval Air Station (NAS) Fallon is the Navy's premier tactical air warfare training center. Every Navy carrier wing trains at Fallon before deploying aboard an aircraft carrier. The installation also trains in support of night bombing exercises. The climate around NAS Fallon is highly conducive to flight training, with 300 days of clear skies per year. Fallon also has a 14,000 foot runway (the longest in the Navy) and four bombing ranges.

Nevada is the fastest growing state in the country, and six of Nevada's nine fastest growing counties are all within commuting distance of the installation, including Churchill County, home to the air station. NAS Fallon is located in the path of rapid development and residential growth, in part because of its proximity to valuable water resources that are attractive to support high-growth residential housing. Development restricts the departure and approach routes of training flights because of noise issues.

The Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI), DoD's conservation buffer program, enables the military to partner with outside stakeholders to promote land conservation that supports military missions and natural resources. Inspired by the success of other REPI projects, a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) ordinance was enacted by Churchill County that helps to preserve agricultural land near NAS Fallon's conservation buffer zone. To participate in the TDR, landowners may retain ownership of most land and water rights, but development rights are removed and can be sold for development of land in another area. Since

agriculture represents one-third of the county's economy, and NAS Fallon represents another third, the TDR program is considered to be a cooperative economic program that is helping to conserve land and inhibit growth.

To date, the DoD-Churchill County cooperative partnership has conserved a fourth of its 6,000-acre conservation goal.

“Efforts to maintain [Naval Air Station Fallon's] operational capacity and promote future expansion will benefit the community.”

Lahontan Valley News and Fallon Eagle Standard, Editorial

“Navy-County Buffer a Win-Win,” May 11, 2006

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**Cooperative Conservation
Department of Defense
Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI)
Activity for the Annual Report**

Location

US Army Garrison, Hawaii (Oahu, Hawaii)

Key Interagency Partners

Department of Defense, Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Fish & Wildlife Service, National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, Office of Hawaiian Affairs, and the State of Hawaii

Key Local Partners

Ducks Unlimited, Trust for Public Land, North Shore Community Land Trust, City and County of Honolulu, Kooalau Watershed Partnership

Description of Activity

US Army Garrison, Hawaii is an essential installation in the Pacific due to its ability to very quickly deploy units to the west. It is a training center for Soldiers of the 25th Infantry division, whose mission is to mobilize quickly in support of combat situations, disaster relief missions, and other operations involving U.S. and foreign armed forces. Because of the island of Oahu's small size, large population, and highly desirable climate and scenery, the installation is highly threatened by many encroachments.

In 2005, the Department of Defense (DoD) entered into a partnership with several federal and state and non-government organizations to preserve 1,875 acres of Oahu's pristine Waimea Valley. Urban development threatened to restrict the installation's critical training activities and destroy valuable open space.

The buffer purchased by DoD and partners protects several threatened and endangered species. Hawaii is home to 395 federally listed endangered species (294 are plants), which is more than 30 percent of the nation's total. The US Fish & Wildlife Service requires the Army to protect these species off post as well as on the installation's impact areas. With this buffer in place, several species in the Waimea Valley are protected, including the

native bird ‘Elepaio, 3 species of tree snail, and more than 20 species of plants.

Funding from the Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI), DoD’s conservation buffer program, enabled US Army Garrison, Hawaii, to partner with outside stakeholders to promote land conservation that supports its military mission and the natural habitat. \$2 million in REPI funding leveraged into a \$14 million cooperative conservation partnership to protect the Waimea Valley. Waimea Valley now serves as a cultural resource and open space with significant historical and natural value. This buffer is sustains the military’s mission in the Pacific and preserves the ecological integrity of the island.

“This historic agreement will allow us to preserve one of the most pristine and treasured [areas] on Oahu for future generations.”

Mufi Hannemann
Mayor of Honolulu, HI

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